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20 SEP 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : Deputy Director for Support
Executive Director-Comptroller

SUBJECT : Agency Fitness Reporting System

1. This memorandum is in response to your request for a briefing on the Agency's Fitness Reporting system.

2. The Fitness Report Form (Tab A) is the tangible evidence and focal point of the Agency's Fitness Reporting system. However, it is by no means the sole or even the key element in the total Agency program of personnel evaluation and management. The evaluation of personnel is a continuing process. Employees are evaluated at least annually through the competitive promotion system, they are evaluated for rotation and reassignment, they are evaluated in connection with training courses. The responsibility of supervisors for the evaluation of personnel is repeatedly stated in our regulations. For example:

a. [] The Career Services, states the following among the responsibilities of the Heads of Career Services:

"(2) Planning the utilization and development of such individuals, including their training, assignment, rotation and advancement;

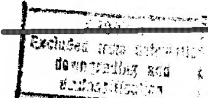
(3) Reviewing Fitness Reports..."

b. [] Conduct and Discipline, makes each Deputy Director or Head of an Independent Office responsible for ensuring that "supervisors and others under his direction who have personnel management responsibilities read [] Promoting Good Employee Performance and Conduct," and for providing these officials "guidance and advice when violations of Agency rules are reported to him..."

c. [] Management of Staff Personnel, states that "Supervisors at all echelons are responsible for the proper utilization and continuing evaluation of personnel assigned to their respective jurisdictions. They shall advise the Career Service concerned, through appropriate channels, when there is evidence that an employee is misassigned."

3. The purposes of the Agency's Fitness Reporting system embrace the traditional purposes of performance evaluation -- appraising employees to determine if they should be promoted, reassigned, left in place, or fired. In addition, the Agency's system provides a mechanism for (a) assuring mutual

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understanding between employee and supervisor of the specific duties of each job, (b) assuring that the employee is told, at least annually, of the supervisor's evaluation of his performance of each of his major duties and of his composite effectiveness, and (c) providing at least annually a formal record of comments and suggestions of an employee's current supervisor regarding the employee's future training, his managerial competence, and his major strengths and weaknesses.

4. The present Fitness Report form has been evolved to serve the Agency's requirements for making, recording, and using personnel evaluations. It is the seventh revision in a series which started in 1949. In arriving at the present form, we have experimented with forms which were largely narrative comments, and with forms which constituted a forced-choice checklist. We have used a two-part form in trying to compromise the "show-no show" issue. The current form was first issued in April 1968 and represents the improvements suggested by our experience with earlier forms. It is important to recognize that each revision of the form has been the result of careful study not only by staff officers and technicians but also by the Agency's senior officials.

5. A discussion of the form itself must start with the policy statement in [redacted] "The continuous evaluation of the performance of employees by their supervisors is an essential element of the Agency's personnel management program. The results of such evaluation for staff employees and staff agents shall be recorded at least once each year." (underlining added). Further, the Directions for Completing Form #5, Fitness Report (Tab C) begin with "It is Organization policy to inform employees of the effectiveness of their work performance. Organization policy also requires that supervisors record at least once each year their opinions and evaluations of the work performance of employees under their jurisdiction." (underlining added). The form, then, is to record an evaluation which has been reached during the reporting period and which should have been a matter of at least informal discussion with the employee from time to time during the reporting period.

6. Now, as to the specifics of the form:

a. Section A is general identifying information about the individual and his employment status and indicates the purpose of the specific rating (i.e., annual, special, reassignment, etc.).

b. Section B provides for a graded rating both of performance of specific duties and of overall or total effectiveness. The listing of specific duties for rating provides an opportunity for both employee and supervisor to reaffirm in some detail what the job entails. More important, it assures discussion of the employee's performance of each element of the job. The rating of "Overall Performance in Current Position" embraces conduct, work habits, and personal traits influencing the employee's total effectiveness. In addition, a single overall performance rating permits mechanical recordation to provide statistical data for monitoring the application of the evaluation system.

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c. Section C is a narrative statement which amplifies and explains the ratings given in Section B to provide the best basis for determining the future management of the employee. It calls for specific suggestions for the improvement of work performance, invites recommendations for training and, where appropriate, calls for comments on foreign language competence and effectiveness in managerial duties. In summary, this section is designed to give specific career guidance to the individual and to the career management mechanisms of the Agency.

d. Section D, in addition to providing for certifications by the employee and supervisor, presents to the reviewing official (usually the rating officer's immediate supervisor) the opportunity and the duty of commenting on the rated employee, the ratings given and on the rating officer. Again quoting from the Directions, "Reviewing officials are responsible for assuring that all reports made by rating officials under their jurisdiction are consistent and reflect uniform standards of reporting. Through the counseling and supervision of rating officials, reviewing officials can play a major role in improving the operation of the Fitness Report program."

7. The Fitness Report form described above is used for all employees in grades GS-13 and below. Optionally, an evaluation in memorandum form may be substituted for the form for employees in grades GS-14 and above. This permits a rating officer to avoid the constraints of trying to force the broad and unspecific duties of a senior officer into the format of the form itself. It is required however that an evaluation in memorandum form observe the basic purposes of the Fitness Report form, including a general description of duties and one definitive rating describing overall performance. It must also bear the signature of the rating officer, the reviewing official, and the employee.

8. Having described the Agency's Fitness Reporting system, it is appropriate that some observations and assessments now be made as to its effectiveness.

a. Is the system uniformly understood as to purposes and objectives and is it being uniformly applied by Agency supervisors? Our most recent statistical analysis of the overall performance ratings of all Agency staff employees both at headquarters and in the field reveals a high correlation of the distribution of ratings on the five points of the rating scale among the principal Career Service groupings (Tab D). Where significant deviations appear, we believe there are logical explanations. The similarity in rating patterns among these groups indicates that rating standards are being applied with substantial uniformity.

b. Are meaningful observations and recommendations being made for the improvement of the individual's performance and for subsequent career management decisions? This question cannot be answered statistically. However, the consensus appears to be that the narrative portion (Section C) of the Fitness Report does give an accurate description of the employee's performance and potential. It is rare that these comments

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are brutally frank in indicating weaknesses -- such comments are more often softened or indicated in what is not said in the report. It may appear cynical to observe that there is a skill in reading and interpreting Fitness Reports but the experienced user of these reports does acquire the ability to "read between the lines" for criticisms.

c. The objective evaluation of other persons is at best a most difficult task. To be required to do so and to critique a subordinate's performance and personal qualifications in a documented face-to-face situation is a task that supervisors find onerous and embarrassing. Many will avoid the discomfort they suffer by rating generously and by the use of obscure and wishy-washy phraseology. To avoid deterioration of any rating system, constant monitoring and attention through the command line is requisite. In fact the more emphasis and the higher the level of evidenced command interest and determination, the more useful and better the system will be. If there are no signs of management's interest in the mechanism, the preparation of reports becomes routine and redundant. There have been periodic actions to remind supervisors of the importance of Fitness Reports and of management's interest and concern that the Reports be timely, accurate, and useful. The last formal issuance on these points was Headquarters [redacted] dated 10 October 1968 (Tab R). However, this topic was also covered in the series of compulsory lectures on supervision given to all headquarters supervisors in 1964.

d. There is nothing sacred about the present Fitness Report form. As noted earlier, it is the seventh revision. Further changes could be made in concept, form, or scope. However, our experience has been that it takes two to three years for supervisors to become accustomed to a new form and for uniform standards of evaluation to develop. Each new form must evolve through a period of resistance to change and education of supervisors.

e. Corollary to this briefing on the present Agency Fitness Reporting system it is important to point out that it is but a small part of the full performance evaluation in effect -- both formal and informal. Performance evaluation is informally inherent in every supervisor-subordinate daily working situation, it occurs repeatedly in connection with the review of employees for reassignment consideration. This occurs not only at the operating component level but at the Career Service mechanism level as well. It occurs most objectively and critically in connection with Agency competitive promotion practices. In summary and for the indefinite future I recommend:

a. The continuation of the present Fitness Reporting form and concept.

b. A forceful renewed expression of command interest and intent with vigorous use of the Fitness Reporting system.

/s/ Emmett D. Bohlen
Emmett D. Bohlen
Director of Personnel

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